

An introduction to

Herniated discs

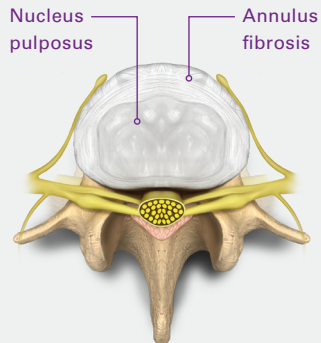
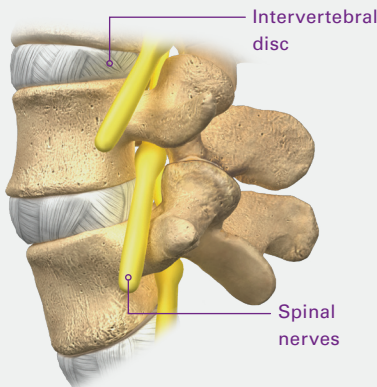
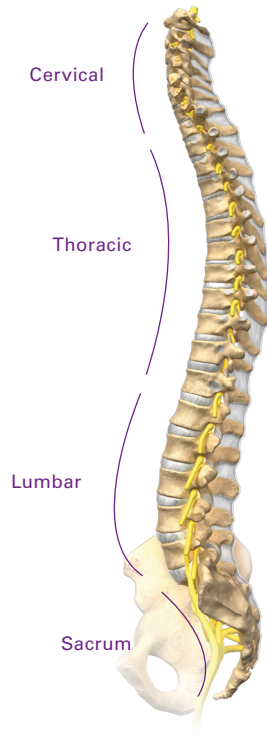
This booklet provides general information on herniated discs. It is not meant to replace any personal conversations that you might wish to have with your physician or other member of your healthcare team. Not all the information here will apply to your individual treatment or its outcome.



About the spine

The human spine is made up of 24 bones or vertebrae in the cervical (neck) spine, the thoracic (chest) spine, and the lumbar (lower back) spine, plus the sacral bones.

Vertebrae are connected by several joints, which allow you to bend, twist, and carry loads. The main joint between two vertebrae is called an intervertebral disc. The disc is made of two parts, a tough and fibrous outer layer (annulus fibrosis) and a soft, gelatinous center (nucleus pulposus). These two parts work in conjunction to allow the spine to move, and also provide shock absorption.

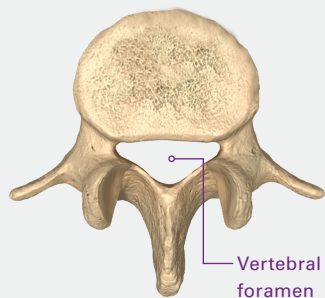
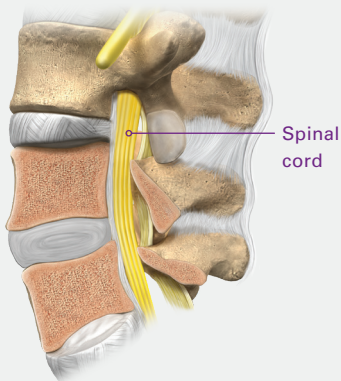
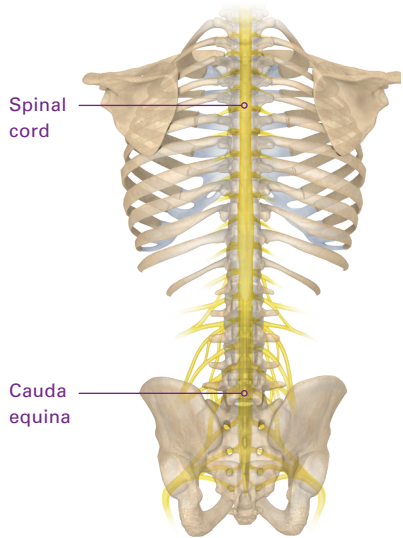


About the spinal cord and cauda equina

Each vertebra has an opening (vertebral foramen) through which a tubular nervous structure travels. Beginning at the base of the brain to the upper lumbar spine, this structure is called the spinal cord.

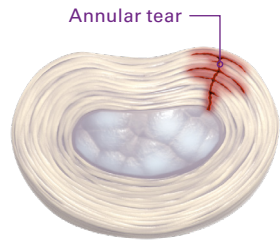
Below the spinal cord, in the lumbar spine, the nerves that exit the spinal cord continue to travel through the vertebral foramen as a bundle known as the cauda equina.

At each level of the spine, spinal nerves exit the bony spine then extend throughout the body.



What is a herniated disc?

When the gelatinous center of the intervertebral disc pushes out through a tear in the fibrous wall, the disc herniates. This disc herniation adds pressure to the surrounding spinal nerves causing mild to severe pain. It is one of the most common spinal disorders.



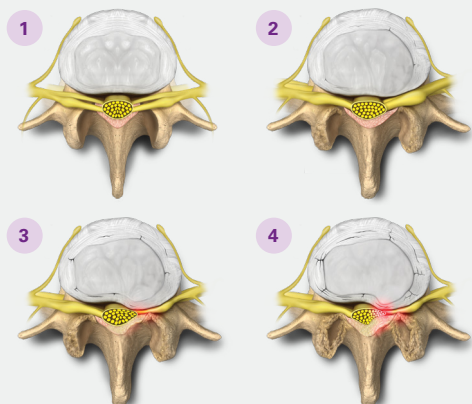
What causes a herniated disc?

A herniated disc may be caused by simple wear and tear from repeated movement over time or disc degeneration. During the natural aging process, spinal discs lose some of their water content making it difficult to support the load from above vertebrae.

Other causes of a herniated disc may include the following:

- long standing trauma,
- hereditary or congenital abnormalities,
- stress fractures, and
- a sudden heavy strain or increased pressure.

Disc degeneration with subsequent nerve impingement



Normal disc

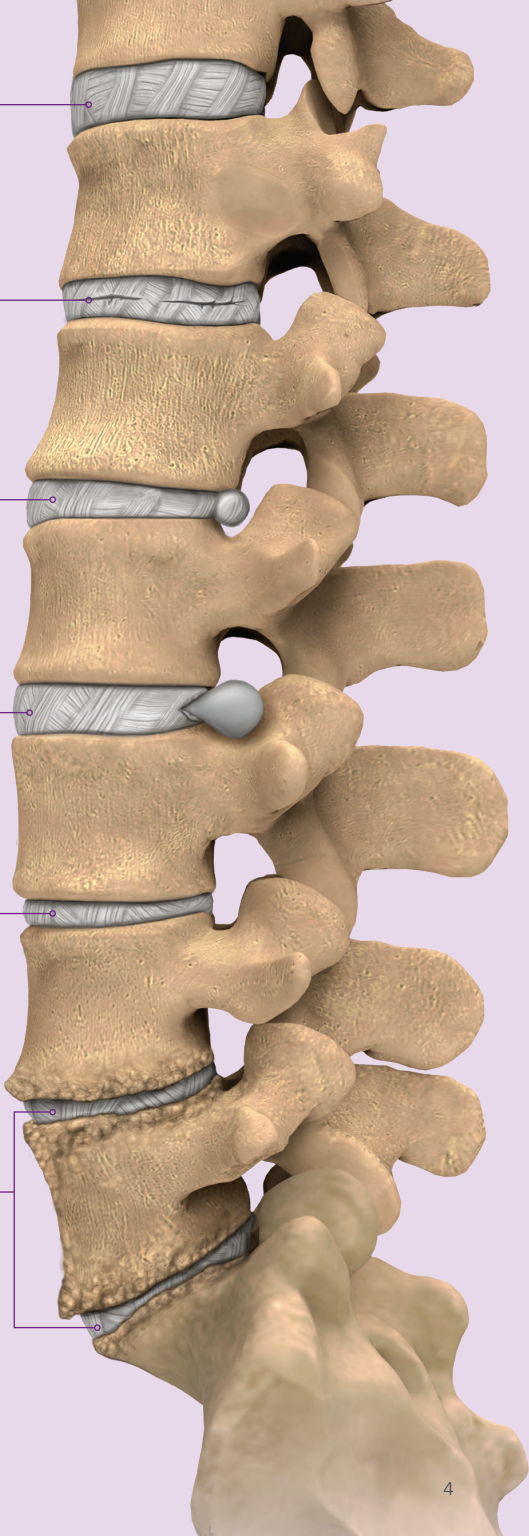
Degenerated disc

Bulging disc

Herniated disc

Thinning disc

Disc degeneration with osteophyte formation



What are the symptoms?

While a herniated disc can happen at any level of the spine, it most commonly occurs in the lumbar region or lower back.

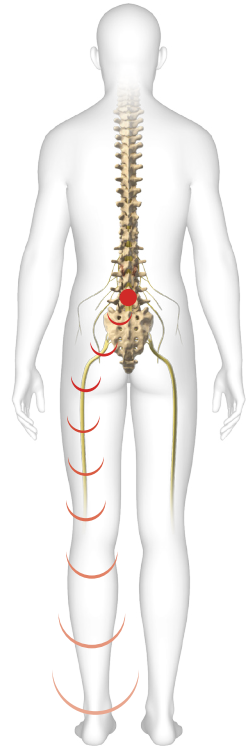
Symptoms of a herniated disc may include:

- pain at the site of injury,
- pain, numbness, weakness or tingling in the arms or legs,
- pain that worsens when bending, twisting and/or sitting, and
- muscle spasms.

In addition to these symptoms, if the herniated disc is located in the cervical spine or neck, symptoms may include:

- loss of bladder control,
- loss of coordination,
- the feeling of heavy limbs, and
- trouble balancing.

If you feel that you are experiencing any of these symptoms, you should consult a physician for an accurate diagnosis.



What are treatment options?

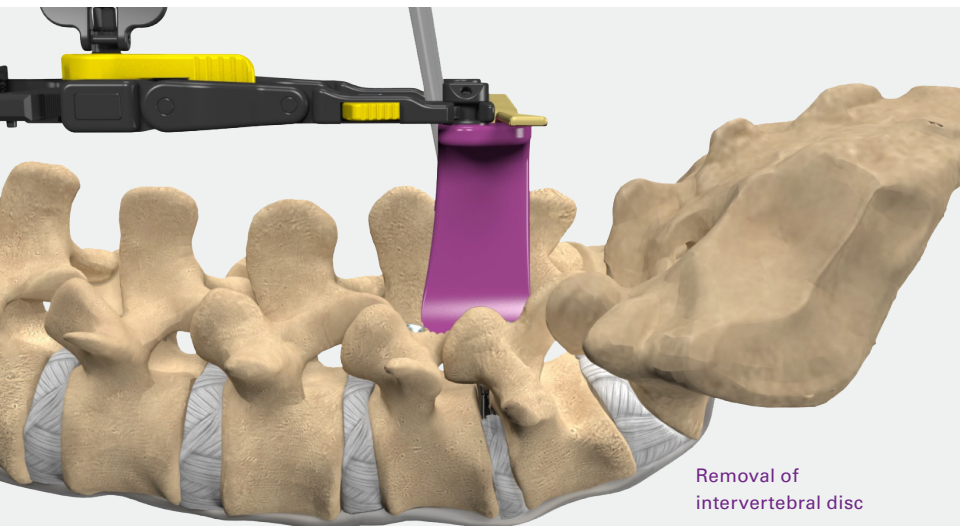
If a herniated disc is established, your doctor may recommend one or more of the following treatments based on your individual condition:

- physical therapy and strengthening exercises,
- rest and a restriction of physical activity,
- injections (corticosteroids) to help reduce the pain and swelling,
- medications and analgesics to reduce pain and swelling (typical medications include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs), and
- application of heat and/or ice to help reduce pain, inflammation and muscle spasms.

What are surgical solutions?

If your symptoms do not improve with other methods, your physician may suggest spinal surgery. Surgical solutions for herniated discs may include the following:

- discectomy and
- laminectomy.



Removal of intervertebral disc

Notes

Resources

For more information about spine surgery, please visit:

nuvasive.com

If you would like to learn more about patient support and education for chronic back, leg and neck pain sufferers and their loved ones, please visit:

thebetterwayback.org

If you have any questions about herniated discs or spine surgery, please call or visit your physician, who is the only one qualified to diagnose and treat your spinal condition. This patient information brochure is not a replacement for professional medical advice.

About **The Better Way Back**[®]

The Better Way Back is a nationwide patient support program created by NuVasive[®], a leader in developing minimally invasive, procedurally-integrated spine solutions. The Better Way Back is a free community built on the power of empathy, and is dedicated to providing hope, support and information to individuals suffering from chronic back, leg or neck pain.

Through its Patient Ambassador Program, The Better Way Back pairs patients considering spine surgery with patients who have previously undergone a spine procedure. Ambassadors volunteer their time to discuss their experiences in order to provide additional, first-hand perspectives.

To learn more about The Better Way Back, please



call **1-800-745-7099**



visit **thebetterwayback.org**



text "TBWB" to **858-360-8292**

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